

**How COMMUNITY AND
RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS
CAN PROMOTE**



EDUCATION

Girls'

Project Design No. 10

KEEPING GIRLS IN SCHOOL: CHILD CARE PROGRAMS FOR YOUNGER SIBLINGS

WHY SUPPORT GIRLS' EDUCATION?

An educated populace is a fundamental requirement for sustained social and economic development. Considerable research demonstrates that girls' education yields high social and economic returns. Female literacy and schooling have been linked to increased household, industrial, and agricultural productivity, improved health and nutrition, decreased maternal and infant mortality, decreased birth rates, and increased education of succeeding generations. In recent years, efforts have focused particularly on investing in girls' education to fuel development.

Creating community-based options for the care of younger siblings can be a vital strategy for supporting girls' education, and religious and community organizations are often ideally positioned to play a leadership role in establishing and maintaining quality child care programs.

HOW DO CHILD CARE PROGRAMS SUPPORT GIRLS' EDUCATION?

Child care programs support girls' education in many ways. Perhaps most importantly, they serve to free school-age girls from caring for their younger siblings and permit the girls to attend school. Community-based child care also provides opportunities for young mothers to re-enter school if they choose to do so rather than remain full-time caretakers. In addition, quality early childhood programs can provide a head start for girls' enrolled in them. Programs that focus on promoting girls' cognitive and psychosocial development enhance school readiness and improve girls' chances of future success in school. Quality child care ensures that pre-school children are safe during the day and provides comprehensive services including early childhood education, health, and nutrition services.

Improving Access to Schooling for Older Siblings

Expectations that older siblings will care for younger children is a substantial impediment to education for girls in developing countries around the world (World Bank, 1990):

- In Gambia, the reason given for about 10 percent of female dropouts from primary school is “staying home to care for siblings.”
- Studies in Brazil, Mexico, and Guatemala indicate that older siblings, generally girls, tend to serve as mother substitutes for their younger brothers and sisters, with a decline in these girls’ school attendance.

Increased availability of low-cost child care services can reduce the demand for older siblings to be caregivers, liberating them to continue their schooling. In China, for example, where female enrollments lagged behind male enrollment, several provinces experimented with sibling care as a strategy to increase girls’ participation in schooling (Herz, et al., 1991):

- In Gansu Province, urban child-care centers were established for working mothers. The practice improved the rate of enrollment of their daughters in school.
- In rural areas in China, about 30 new village schools allowed girls to bring their younger siblings to school. The practice increased school enrollment by about 3 percent in three years.

Improving Educational Opportunities for Younger Children

Child care programs that provide comprehensive services result in the improved health and nutrition status of participating children, increased chances of child survival, and improved cognitive, social/emotional, language, and physical development. They often produce future benefits in terms of children’s educational progress as indicated by children’s performance and achievement in primary schools:

- *Seamless Transition to Primary Schooling.* Quality child care programs can provide a more seamless transition to primary schooling for difficult to reach children, especially girls. In India, for example, studies show that children who have attended child care centers are more likely to enroll in primary school (Rugh, 1994).
- *Increased Retention in Primary Schooling.* Quality child care programs also impact girls’ retention in school. In Choco, an impoverished area in Colombia, 60 percent of early childhood program participants reached fourth grade compared to 30 percent of the comparison group (Myers, 1995).
- *Improved School Performance.* Early childhood programs also impact girls’ school performance. Children who have been in child care programs, particularly the most disadvantaged children, have less chance of grade repetition, and overall higher grades and better performance. In Brazil, children who attended child care programs had a repetition rate of only 9 percent compared to 33 percent for the control group. (Myers, 1995).

HOW CAN LOCAL COMMUNITY AND RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS PROMOTE GIRLS' EDUCATION THROUGH HIGH-QUALITY, AFFORDABLE CHILD CARE?

In countries where older children are often responsible for the care of their younger siblings while parents work, community and religious organizations can play important roles in improving girls' access to education by creating and maintaining high-quality, affordable child care services. They have intimate knowledge of local circumstances and can define community needs and support development services that are beneficial for girls' education.

Religious and community organizations also have access to the local resources to promote child care, and therefore make girls' education more easily obtainable. Examples include the following:

- Community members who can volunteer their time, or work at a subsidized rate, to help administer and staff child care services;
- Facilities that can be used for center- or home-based child care;
- Access to supplies and services (e.g., furnishings, playthings, nutritional meals and snacks, health services) to support children's needs; and
- A moral or spiritual philosophy to serve as the basis for early childhood development.

Community and religious organizations that are concerned with providing girls opportunities to attend school can support child care activities in different ways. First, they can create and administer direct child care services. This can include opening new child care centers or establishing networks of home-based care providers. Group care can involve informal arrangements (e.g., home day care in which one person cares for several children in her home) as well as more formal pre-school (e.g., centers with comprehensive programs for 3- to 6-year olds, or crèches serving infants and toddlers). Programs for ages 0 to 3 often focus on nutrition and health care while those for older pre-schoolers usually provide more wide-ranging services.

Alternatively, community and religious organizations can assist other groups in creating new child care opportunities. They can guide other groups in the practical steps necessary to establish affordable and quality child care, provide start-up resources for new child care providers, and assist in maneuvering through legal requirements. Child care programs can be the focus of a community development strategy. One strategy is to work with the community as a whole to change the conditions that may adversely affect child development. Such an initiative can provide a medium for common action to implement changes in the physical environment including sanitation such as hygiene, potable water, and safety such as providing spaces for play.

Community and religious organizations also have the power to become central repositories of information about early childhood development. They can gather information about child development, health, and nutrition and share that advice with participating families. Similarly, they can sponsor training for new child care providers and ongoing assistance to more experienced child care providers.

None of these important services are possible when communities rely primarily on sibling care.

DESIGNING AND IMPLEMENTING CHILD CARE PROGRAMS

In designing and implementing high-quality and affordable child care programs, religious and community organizations must make multiple decisions. These include decisions about the kinds of child care services that will be provided, how they will be staffed, and how they will be supported. Following are examples of key questions that must be answered when designing new child care programs:

Child Care Models

- In addition to the primary goal of allowing older siblings to attend school, what are the purposes of the child-care program?
- Which child care model is most appropriate to achieve the intended outcomes (e.g., a child center, a program to support and educate family caregivers, or a community development program with a focus on child care initiatives)?
- Who will be involved in designing and implementing the program?
- What services will the program provide (e.g., education for children, health and nutrition for children, parent education or staff training)?
- What are the criteria used to select children who will benefit from the services provided?

Staffing

- Who will administer child care services and serve as caregivers (e.g., people who are involved in the community or religious organization, grandmothers, least-educated women)?
- What is the level of education and child development knowledge of potential staff?
- What training opportunities will be available for administrators and caregivers?

Resources

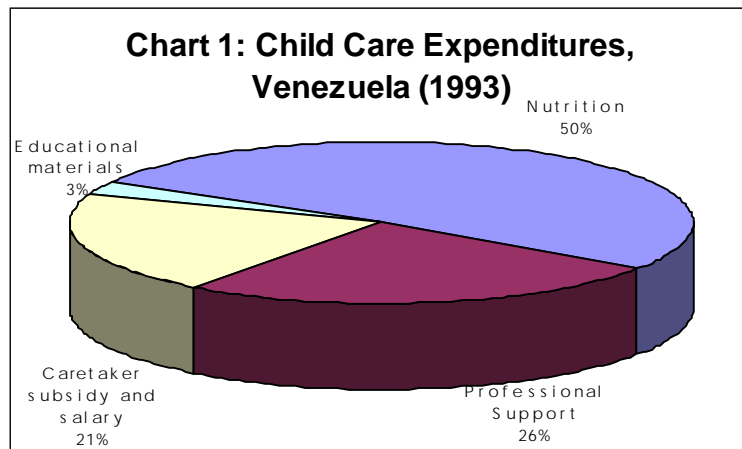
- Who will be targeted provide start-up funding and ongoing support for new child care services?
- To what extent will sponsoring community or religious organizations donate space, provide caregivers, pay part of the salary of the care providers, and provide other resources?
- Will the government consider supervising the program and providing health services?
- Will participating NGOs provide technical support and training, nutritional supplies, and supplement the salaries of care providers?
- What resources are necessary to ensure the long-term success of the initiative and to sustain it over time?

WHAT ARE THE COSTS OF CHILD CARE PROGRAMS?

Child care costs vary based on the kinds of services provided, but they usually include funds for administration and supervision, facilities, training and materials, staff salaries, food, materials, and playthings. When community and religious organizations sponsor child care services, however, many of these costs can be defrayed or shared among the community. Following are examples of costs associated with two child care programs. The first is a home-based program in Venezuela, and the second is a center-based program in Kenya.

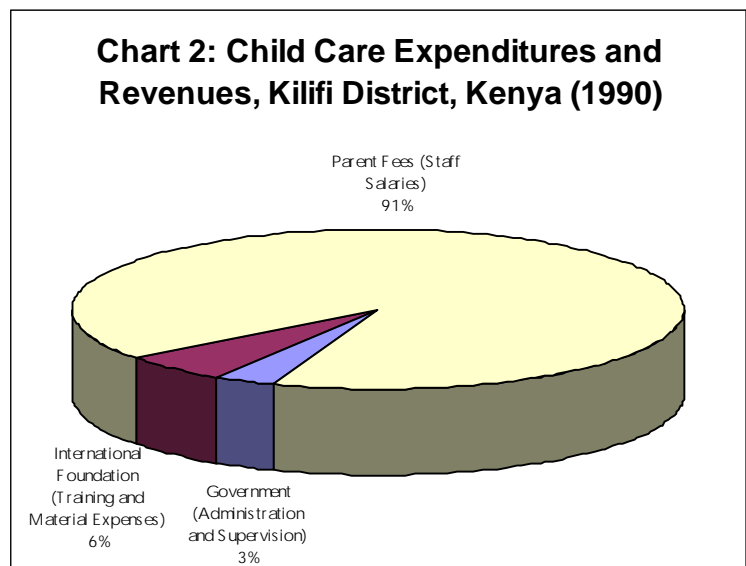
The Venezuela Home Day Care Program

In Venezuela, home day-care programs were developed in which working mothers turned to their neighbors for help in caring for their children during working hours. In the original model, women from the community were selected to receive training and provide care in their home for 5 to 8 children under age 6. Home-care mothers were provided with appropriate equipment and educational materials to support their work. After four years the program expanded to serve 236,000 children. The Ministry of the Family administers and oversees the program. The home-care mother receives a monthly subsidy from the government for feeding each child and a monthly payment from the mother of each child. The cost is estimated at \$39 per child per month. The cost breakdown is summarized in Chart 1 (Evans and Myers, 2000).



The Kenyan Pre-School Program

The Kenyan early childhood program is a decentralized community-based program with roots in the Harambee self-help movement. The program is diverse, large, and low-cost. In Kilifi, one of the districts in Kenya, enrollment in pre-schools is estimated at 19,700 children. Parents shoulder most of the program costs, paying fees that cover staff salaries and recurring expenses. In addition, parents make in-kind contributions of such items as food, materials, and playthings. They also donate their time to raise funds, create awareness of the need for pre-school education, help with food preparation, fetch water or firewood, clear and clean the compound, repair furniture, make materials, and attend parent meetings.



Community organizations often contribute free space, food, and materials. About one-sixth are run by the County Council. The remaining pre-schools are sponsored by town councils, municipal councils, religious groups, or private organizations. These sponsors provide space, equipment, and supplies. The attached

pie chart, Chart 2, illustrates the sources of revenues and expenditures, which sums to approximately \$18 per student per year (Evans and Myers, 2000).

HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE TO IMPLEMENT A CHILD CARE PROGRAM?

Different child-care models require different time schedules. The following are generic phases in the life of a development project:

- *Conducting an Initial Community Needs Assessment.* The sponsoring religious or community organization should survey community needs and be certain that there is a need to develop a program. In addition, participants should assess what child care models might be implemented in line with the community resources to assure sustainability.
- *Designing and Piloting the Program.* This phase consists of designing a model and testing it out in a few sites.
- *Evaluating and Reviewing the Program.* When the experimental model has been in place for some time, the organization should assess what has been accomplished and considers future options.
- *Revising and Modifying the Model.* During this phase, the model is modified to increase its quality of services and its sustainability.
- *Scaling Up.* At this stage, the agency or organization has sufficient confidence in the model and expands its implementation.

Activities	Month																		
	Conducting an Initial Community Needs Assessment							Designing and Piloting the Program											
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
Contact Local Community Organizations	*	*																	
Conduct Assessment		*	*																
Identify Development Project			*	*															
Plan the Program				*	*														
Organize Local Community Groups					*	*	*												
Set up: Facilities, Equipment, Supplies						*	*	*											
Train Staff								*			*			*			*		
Monitor the Program								*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*

The timeline on the previous page is suggested for the planning phase of a child care program (i.e., conducting the community needs assessment, designing a model and testing it out in a few sites). The later phases of experimentation (i.e., piloting, evaluation, and revision) may take anywhere from two to five years. Scaling up follows after that.

SUMMARY

The creation of high-quality child care programs is an important strategy for supporting girls' education. First, child care frees older siblings from their responsibilities for younger siblings. This freedom enables older siblings and young mothers to attend school. In addition, child care programs provide a head start for girls enrolled. They improve young children's readiness for school, increase the likelihood of their timely enrollment in school, lower their chance of grade repetition, and boost their performance. Religious and community organizations are often the ideal agents to make community child care possible. They can create and administer child care services directly; facilitate child care needs assessments; commit labor, facilities, and other resources to establish new programs; and collect and disseminate information about best practices.

In planning for child care programs, it is necessary to make decisions about models for care, staffing, and resources. Programs for infants to 3-year-olds must include nutrition and health care. Pre-school-aged children benefit most from an environment that stimulates learning, and promotes language, physical and social/emotional development. Communities might be able to provide facilities, staff, and staff salaries, but other commodities such as health services, training, supplies, equipment and materials may be beyond community means. Government agencies, donors, and NGOs can often be approached to provide these resources.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Evans, Judith, and Myers, Robert, *Case Studies*, the Consultative Group on Early Childhood Care and Development, retrieved October 5, 2000 from the Internet: <http://www.ecdgroup.com/cases/cases.html>.

Herz, Barbara, Subharao, K., Habib, Masosma, and Raney, Laura, *Letting Girls Learn: Promising Approaches in Primary and Secondary Education*, World Bank Discussion Papers, #133, 1991.

Myers, Robert, *The Twelve Who Survive: Strengthening Programmes of Early Childhood Development in the Third World, Second Edition*, Michigan: High/Scope Press, 1995.

Rugh, Andrea, *Situational Analysis of Girls' Education in India*, U.S. Agency for International Development, November 1994.

World Bank, *Staff Appraisal Report The Gambia Education Sector Project*, Report Number 8359-GM, Washington D.C., 1990.

WHERE TO GO FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information, contact your ministry or department of education for a list of schools and organizations working in education in your region.

This paper is one of a series of project designs on activities to promote girls' education. The series includes:

1. *Enhancing Girls' Education through Community Schools*
2. *Improving the Physical Environment in Support of Girls' Education*
3. *Investments that Yield High Returns: Scholarships for Girls*
4. *Using Incentives to Promote Girls' Education*
5. *Using Mentoring to Promote Girls' Education*
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